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ABSTRACT

This group facilitator manual which forms the basis of a package of materials (including a handbook and media presentation) is designed for use with child care councils, policy advisory committees, and child advocacy groups which want to become more effective in developing programs for children. The manual is divided into two major sections. The first section briefly reviews the concepts and principles used in the handbook; that is, the need, approach, theory, and planning process which underlie the package. Information related to the processes of group dynamics is reviewed. The second section reviews the individual steps and decisions found in the handbook including twelve questions through which the group defines itself, its goals, decisions, actions, and follow-up evaluation. For each of these questions, the facilitator is provided guidelines on what to watch and keep in mind, the semantics involved, plus other considerations. Brief sections are also included on the use of the transparencies and slide show. (ED)

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PLANNING FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT

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PLANNING FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT PACKAGE

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HANDBOOK AND MANUAL

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foreword

The PLANNING FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT PACKAGE represents a community development effort on the part of the Appalachian Child Care Project to produce materials for use with child care councils, policy advisory committees, and child advocate groups which want to become more effective in developing programs for children.

What follows is a step-by-step procedure for a group to plan, do, and evaluate a project of its own choosing and improve management skills in the process.

We asked a successful, rural arts council with strong local support and a background in children's programs to help us. We wanted practical, useful materials with a self-help emphasis. We are pleased with the results and hope they will be useful to you.

The PLANNING FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT PACKAGE is not only intended for use in rural Georgia, but as a resource for other child development programs in all of Appalachia and throughout the country where two or more people are willing to work together to make good things happen for children!

Thomas McClure
Resource Development
APPALACHIAN CHILD CARE PROJECT

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READ THIS PAGE FIRST——

Dear HELPER,

This MANUAL has been written to help you help a group use the PLANNING FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT Handbook.

Other tools available to you in the PLANNING FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT Package are Overhead Projector Transparencies and a Slide/Sound Presentation.

You, in the role of Helper, are considered to be another one of the elements of this Package.

The heart of the PLANNING FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT Package is the Handbook. The first thing you should do is thoroughly review it in its entirety.

The Handbook is a guided tour of a planning process which, if it is utilized faithfully and completely, will bring a group to effective planning.

This Manual has two main helps to offer you:

> HELP FOR THE HELPER—GENERAL which will review the general concepts and principles used in the Handbook
>
> and
>
> HELP FOR THE HELPER—SPECIFIC which will review the individual steps and decisions found in the Handbook.

Brief sections are also included on the use of the Transparencies and the Slide Show.

Good luck.

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HELP FOR THE HELPER

GENERAL

INTRODUCTION

THE NEED

Each community contains many kinds of groups trying to accomplish things for themselves, their community, or both.

These groups can all benefit by knowing the most effective way to accomplish what they want.

The PLANNING FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT PACKAGE is designed to meet this need. It is easy to use, easy to understand, and has the realistic goal of helping a group to develop its own natural strengths and capacities.

THE APPROACH

The approach used in PLANNING FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT is to say what needs to be said with the least amount of confusing language.

The PLANNING FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT materials include the essential points of "good planning" set forth in a number of texts on the subject, but the local community groups who would be the actual users of the materials provided the starting point for developing the planning package.

As a result of this approach, the PLANNING FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT materials, developed from the field, using the language of the field, has the sense of relevance needed for planning to be effective.

THE THEORY

The premise of the PLANNING FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT materials is that groups already know all they need to know in order to function effectively. Often, however, groups do not know that they know this.

When a group sets out to accomplish anything, each member of the group needs to make use of the resources and questions he himself has used in the process of living his personal life. For, each individual carries within himself essential resources and knowledge by which he deals with such questions as why he exists, what he desires to get out of life, and how to go about getting what he desires.

(INTRO *continued*)

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THE THEORY (cont.)

People differ greatly in the degree to which they are successful in this process, but all people participate in this fundamental kind of human planning.

The group task is to bring into conscious focus the innate knowledge and experience available within the group's individuals, and make it accessible to the group process.

THE PROCESS

Planning, in essence, means the making of decisions, with an implied commitment to carrying out those decisions. The planning process in these materials is understood to be a coherent series of decisions, building one upon the other, in a logical fashion, culminating in action that produces results which can be measured in a tangible way.

As much as possible, the Handbook is designed to be self-explanatory and, in theory, could be used by a group without a Helper.

In practice, however, the effectiveness of the Handbook is very much dependant upon the participation of a Helper. The catalytic exchange that occurs in the three-way relationship of Handbook, group, and Helper, is, in reality, the real secret of these materials.

00011

QUESTIONS——

There are twelve questions in the PLANNING FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT Handbook. The questions should be seen as, and used as, a means to focus the attention of the group members upon a specific body of information they possess within themselves.

The group should ask itself each question in the order in which they appear in the Handbook. The Helper should discourage the natural tendency of the group to look ahead and to try to answer questions that have not yet been asked.

How fast or slow the group progresses through the twelve questions will vary widely from group to group. No group should attempt to go through the entire Handbook in one sitting, or even in one long day. There is a dimension of longevity and continuity to effective group functioning that cannot be fully experienced and appreciated in a single day.

Exactly when, how fast, and where the group will cover the material in the Handbook should be decided at the first meeting.

ANSWERS——

The term "answer" as it is used in these materials means the personal, individual response of each member of the group to the question being asked. As explained earlier, these materials are based upon the belief that effective group functioning grows out of the pooled wisdom of the individuals comprising the group. This pool of wisdom does not become an actuality, however, until each member has supplied his own personal answer to the questions asked.

Therefore, following the introduction of each question for the consideration of the group, there should be a period of time given over to the private working through, in each member's own mind, of the implications of the question asked.

By writing his own personal response in the empty box, each member will later be able to look back over what he has written and compare his personal response with the group decision when that decision is made and entered in its own box in the Handbook.

There is not an empty box for the personal response to each of the twelve questions, but the need for each person in the group to feel that he has personally responded to each question in some fashion remains the same. In the case where there is no box, the group members should be encouraged to make notations of their thoughts and ideas and feelings in the margins of the Handbook.

00012

AGREEMENT——

An experience of sharing forms the basis of the step in the process called AGREEMENT. Each member of the group shares his response with the other members of the group. It is important that the Helper emphasize at this point that an atmosphere of careful listening and acceptance should be present in as great a degree as possible.

Critical comments or negative reactions, although impossible to avoid entirely, are generally not helpful and should not be employed by members of the group.

Everyone's response to the question asked needs to be heard by everyone else, because all the individual responses together form the collective pool of wisdom which underlies any decision the group comes to.

When everyone's response has been noted, the group is ready to come to an AGREEMENT as to what the entire collection of responses seems to indicate. This might take the form of selecting one or more responses, or it might take the form of an entirely new statement, composed through discussion among the members of the group.

Care should be taken, during this process, to avoid giving the impression that certain responses were "more right" than others, and to keep in mind that everyone's response was a necessary part of the process.

DECISION——

The group makes a decision when it gives its formal endorsement to the agreed-upon statement. In so doing, the group is taking its first real move toward putting itself into action. The group is saying, "Yes, this is what we want to be actively involved with; this is where we actually intend and expect to expend our time and energy."

Each decision, as it is made in response to each of the questions, becomes part of "the program for action" that the group intends to enact.

The importance of the formal "decision statement" that the group has agreed to is underscored by the requirement that each member of the group write the decision statement in his book, in the appropriately numbered box.

00013

COMMITMENT——

Decision requires commitment.

A group that has made a decision needs to possess a strong sense that it intends to make good that decision.

The contribution the Helper can make at this time, when a sense of commitment is the issue, is to observe when it is present and when it is not.

The Helper should reflect the absence of commitment whenever he feels it is not present. This requires tact and sensitivity on the part of the Helper, but it is something he should not avoid doing, for his failure to bring up the issue out of some sense of kindness or charity toward the group can only boomerang when the group, through its lack of commitment, fails to follow through on its decision.

GROUP POWER——

The making of a decision, backed by a solid commitment from the group, releases in the group a sense of power.

The main task for the Helper at this time is to encourage its wise use when this sense of power begins to make itself felt.

Particularly with a group that has been lethargic, the experience of group power can quickly lead to spontaneous actions based upon momentary bursts of enthusiasm, rather than upon the "program of action" the group is developing.

One particular danger that can arise from unbridled activity based upon enthusiasm alone is the suggestion that the group deal with the remaining questions in a less than thorough fashion, or that some of the questions be dispensed with entirely, based on the notion that "we already know the answers" or "we don't need to know that."

These suggestions come from a group that has begun to feel the excitement of doing something, and of the possibility of doing it well, and wants to "stop wasting time" and "get on with it."

The Helper should be alert to this danger and remind the group that their ultimate success depends on the careful movement of the group through the entire process.

00044

ACTION——

The completion of the Handbook brings the group to the point where it is ready to put into action the results of all its decisions.

Since the object of these materials is to bring a group up to the level of effective functioning, and since a group is functioning effectively when it knows why it exists, and what it wants, and exactly how to get what it wants, the issue of the ACTION of the group is, strictly speaking, not the primary concern of these materials, nor should it be of the helper.

One of the dangers of this process is that the helper will, in effect, become a person who leads the group by the hand, actually performing some of the things needed to be done.

The reason this is a danger is that once the group learns to depend upon the helper, it will be unprepared to assume the role of leadership when the helper finally does leave to return to wherever he came from.

This danger is pointed out precisely because it is a pitfall that groups and helpers of one sort or another have fallen into with great regularity, resulting in damage to the groups and to the agencies attempting to "help" the groups.

It does not rule out the possibility of later participation by the Helper, but such later participation would be supplemental, not necessary in any absolute sense, inasmuch as the group would itself be the locus of power, not the Helper or the agency he represents.

HONESTY——

Often, when the going gets tough in the midst of taking action, there is a tendency to alter the rules of the game so that failure becomes success.

If a group meets with failure, it needs to know this, to admit this, so that the next time it engages in the planning process, it will be able to be more realistic in what it proposes to do.

The group's responses to Question 10 can help: after completing its action, the group can compare its results with its list of expectations, and draw the appropriate conclusions. (This same technique, of course, insures that the group will have an objective basis for judging <u>success</u> as well.)

For this technique to work as intended, it must be <u>set up</u> BEFORE the group takes action, so that it will be ready for <u>use</u> AFTER the group completes its action.

00015

HELP FOR THE HELPER

SPECIFIC

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QUESTION ONE: WHY DOES OUR GROUP EXIST——

The first question is the most basic question the group will deal with and it is perhaps the most difficult to answer. It will often require more time and more effort to produce a focused response to this question than to any of the other eleven.

Tell the members of the group that they should write their ideas in the empty box on page 6. The empty box makes no demands other than that something be put into it. This is the essential thing you, as helper, can do for the group: keep their attention focused upon exactly what the Handbook is asking them to do, avoiding irrelevant tangents.

WATCH FOR:

The question is WHY does the group exist, not HOW did the group come into existance.

Further, we are not asking why a particular person became a member of the group. Although this can sometimes be a valuable clue to the individual's understanding of the group's purpose, it is necessary to avoid even this important a diversion (EXCEPTION NOTED BELOW).

KEEP IN MIND:

Questions 1 through 7 require conscientious attention to the steps outlined in the Handbook. The general approach is that each group member answers the question himself, then shares it with the group (the Helper notating each answer). Then have the group agree on a common answer to be set down in the Handbooks and on the transparencies.

SEMANTICS:

In this question we are trying to deal with the broadest, most fundamental expression of why the group was formed. Do not deal in specific programs or tasks.

The final statement must be agreeable to everyone in the group.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

If the group just can't get started, try going around the room asking each in turn why he got involved and what he hoped to accomplish.

When the group finally focuses this question, the answer should be extremely succinct. Remember, the entire U.S. Constitution and federal government is justified by a single sentence.

09017

QUESTION TWO: WHAT DOES OUR GROUP WANT——

Question 2 is the beginning of a series of questions that attempt to lead the group towards developing a body of information they need before they start to do anything as a group.

The planning process moves from a general picture of what the group wants to an exact picture of what they will do.

WATCH FOR:

There may be members of the group who say, "I don't know what I want," and attempt to avoid answering the question. Ask the group to read the top of page 9 carefully. The key to successful participation in answering this question is to construct a picture in one's mind of the actual things one wants.

If nothing emerges in their minds, have the persons go back to page 7 and read what was decided upon and written down in the WHY EXIST box. If the group has done its job, this WHY EXIST statement should provide the trigger for the WHAT WANT answer.

(If an individual still draws a blank, it may be time for him to consider if he really wants to be a member of this particular group.)

SEMANTICS:

This question deals with the broadest quantifiable accomplishments the group really wants to attempt: such things as programs, activities, facilities, etc.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

The number of answers chosen by the group may be one or several dozen.

00018

QUESTION THREE: WHAT CAN OUR GROUP DO TO MAKE IT HAPPEN——

This question is the first question in which the group considers a new concept: "getting serious". Make sure the group pays particular attention to the words "getting serious". The meaning behind "getting serious" is this: does this group really intend to do what it says, or is it just playing around.

In answering Question 2 we were setting the stage for Question 3. That is why it was so important for everyone to give his answer to that question.

WATCH FOR:

The idea of what can we do tends to be confusing at first, but the point is very simple. The thing to watch out for is suggestions of things to do that the group cannot do. Concentrate on things the group actually can do.

Another thing to watch out for is whether a suggestion of something for the group to do is something they should do.

SEMANTICS:

This question means to have the participants honestly and realistically evaluate what their organization's capabilities and potentials are, which can affect their wants expressed in the previous question.

This is often called "resource assessment", but avoid, if you can, such overworked catch phrases.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

This question is where you will skirt or meet head-on the issue of interagency cooperation/competition and territorial priorities and prerogatives ("should" our group do it?). Often it is a growth experience when your group decides it ought to support another organization's efforts in a particular area.

00019

QUESTION FOUR: HOW DO WE DO IT——

There are two stages to this question. In the first stage, we fill in the BE SERIOUS box. In answering Question 3 we were starting to get serious by making a list of actual concrete things the group could do to get what it wanted.

Starting to get serious is not yet actually being serious. The group will BE SERIOUS when it decides to focus all of its attention on one thing it can do and then begins to decide HOW to do that one thing.

The BE SERIOUS box contains the one thing that the group will now begin to concentrate all its attention upon. It is the thing the group will eventually be doing. Therefore it is important the group be careful about what it decides to BE SERIOUS about. The group should choose whichever it feels is its most compelling priority. (It is not necessary to use the word "priority", especially since much of its common meaning has eroded, but great effort must be exerted to see that the group indeed figures out which item is most important.)

After the BE SERIOUS box is filled in, the group is ready to answer Question 4--HOW do we do it?

WATCH FOR:

It is tempting to the group to fade out here and deal in vague generalities. Focus must be maintained and the group urged to deal with specific, real, and possible actions in some sort of logical sequence.

SEMANTICS:

At this level we are talking about broad actions like— "Make proposal to County Commissioners", "Obtain old school bus", "Raise $10,000", etc.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

Some individuals at this point may leap ahead to minute sub-steps. Their premature suggestions should be listened to, but carried forward into the next question, otherwise it will impede the general group progress.

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QUESTION FIVE: EXACTLY HOW DO WE DO IT——

This question and the following two questions are an intensification of the "being serious" process. The group will look in the HOW DO box on page 15. It will take the first item it wrote in that box and write that item in the STEP box on page 16.

Each member of the group will then close his eyes and imagine himself actually doing what he wrote in the STEP box. Each member of the group will then write in the EXACTLY HOW DO box on page 17 exactly how he imagines the step will be done.

WATCH FOR:

This question is a little bit tricky because it really doesn't provide all the EXACTLY HOW DO boxes needed. Note that we have dealt with only the first step of the several steps we wrote in the HOW DO box on page 15. The Helper should point this fact out. Question 5 needs to be repeated using another STEP box and another EXACTLY HOW DO box (blank sheets of paper will do) for each step that is listed in the HOW DO box on page 16.

KEEP IN MIND:

In this question we are attempting to arrive at all the information needed to give us an extremely specific picture of how to go about doing what it is the group wants to do. It is very important that the members be as specific as possible.

SEMANTICS:

In this question we deal with "rock bottom" specifics: "Get a map from the county court house", "Pick up the state car to take the delegation to the meeting", "Type up the final draft of the proposal", etc.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

This question can seem extremely tedious, but the Helper must be alert to obvious gaps in the list of steps; this is a place where the Helper should push if necessary to get the group to list all the steps that can possibly be identified.

QUESTION SIX: WHO WILL DO IT——

The buck stops here. As long as you say, "Someone will do it", you might as well say, "no one". It is essential to specify exactly who will perform each step listed on page 15. Otherwise the process will break down.

Have the group determine a person in charge of each of the steps on page 15. This person will then assign, with the group's consent, individuals to carry out the "exactly hows" in their step.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

This should be the point where a good group starts "tasting blood" and gets really excited about getting something done. Encourage the enthusiasm, but don't let their excitement steer you away from completing the Handbook which is now in the home stretch.

00022

QUESTION SEVEN: WHEN WILL WE DO IT——

A possible source of confusion is whether the group attempts to establish a single time when it expects all of the steps listed in the HOW DO box on page 15 to be completed, or whether it attempts to establish an expected completion time for each step that is listed.

We recommend establishing time frames for each of the steps in turn, and then deriving an overall schedule from the whole.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

The time (to start) is now, but encourage the group to be realistic about their calendar projections.

At this point the group is ready to act. Except that before it does, it should complete the Handbook, with particular attention to the first portion of Question 10.

00023

QUESTION EIGHT: AM I DOING IT (REALLY DOING IT)——

QUESTION NINE: HOW DO I FEEL ABOUT THIS——

Questions 8 and 9 are questions each member of the group will ask himself while he is actually doing things the group has decided he will do.

Because they are questions that will be answered away from the group on an individual basis, the group usually should discuss these questions at the last meeting before they start actually doing the things they have decided to do.

They are good questions to end such a meeting, as they focus the attention of each member of the group upon his personal reactions to what he is about to do.

Just as the first meeting started with a sharing of personal observations about the group's purpose, now, just before going out and doing assigned tasks, the members of the group can take the discussion of Questions 8 and 9 as an opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings in a general way.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

The discussion of the use and merits of these two questions is greatly dependant upon the style and inclinations of the Helper and the members of the group. They mainly have to do with the individual member keeping himself honest.

Much or little can be made of these questions; don't get hung up on which direction the discussion should take.

Such a discussion could last five minutes or it could go on all day.

00024

QUESTION TEN: DID WE REALLY DO IT——

WHILE YOU'RE WITH THE GROUP

The point of this question is to insure that the group learns from all its time spent and effort expended.

One of the ways people learn from experience is to discover if they actually can do what they want to do. If they cannot, they need to know this so that they can decide upon more realistic tasks next time around. If they can do what they set out to do, they have a basis upon which to decide to be perhaps even more ambitious next time.

Therefore, just before doing something, the group should attempt to make a list of what its expectations are. What do the members think will actually happen? What do they want to happen?

The group whould write its expectations in the box on page 29.

SEMANTICS:

In this question the group must deal with specific, quantified outcomes it is looking for: "75 participants in a summer program", "$1500 in contributions", "40% low-income participation", etc.

THOUGHTS:

You may find that working out this first part of Question 10 causes your group to re-evaluate its initial ideas expressed under WHAT CAN WE DO, HOW WILL WE DO IT, and, particularly, WHEN WILL WE DO IT. It may, in fact, affect almost all the group's previous work. This is OK, and is part of the reason why Question 10 is taken up after some of the earlier questions and answers have had time to settle.

Question 10 provides a last minute "reality check" so the group can test its ideas against the "real" world before launching into action.

AFTER YOU'RE GONE

At the first scheduled meeting following the time agreed upon for the completion of the task (See under Question 7, WHEN), the group should immediately ask itself, DID WE REALLY DO IT?

Before answering this question, however, the group should look at what it wrote in the REALLY DID box on page 29 BEFORE it went out and did what it had decided to do. The group should compare the known results with their expectations listed beforehand. The group should then go to the DID WE column and check YES or NO after each separate expectation.

00025

QUESTION ELEVEN: SO WHAT——

After the group did what it set out to do (if it did much better than it expected, or if it failed miserably), it needs to ask itself: SO WHAT?

was it all worth while? Was it worth the time and effort of the group? Was it a valuable experience? Or would the group have been better advised to spend its time and energy doing something else?

The group should spend some time discussing these questions, all of which are aspects of Question 11, SO WHAT?

QUESTION TWELVE: NOW WHAT——

Although this question can be asked after any action undertaken by the group, it is usually an evaluation the group will make after undertaking a large project that lasts several months or longer. In any event, it is a question that any group should ask itself at least once a year.

In asking, NOW WHAT? the group is attempting to re-assess the answers it gave earlier to Questions 1, 2, and 3.

It is useful to actually go back and read what the group agreed upon in answer to those questions.

Based upon the experience gained by the group since it gave those answers, it should decide if it feels its previous answers are still valid, are still the best expressions of the group's collective wisdom. (In extreme cases, if the group is being honest with itself, it may decide the best thing now is to go out of business.)

If the group has changed, then now is the time for revisions so that the group will be better able to make new decisions about what and how to go about doing things.

00026

SUPPLEMENTAL TOOLS

OVERHEAD TRANSPARENCIES——

As a part of each of the questions, each individual is asked to give his own response. Following this the group is asked to reach a consensus, using the individual input.

In the process of reaching this agreed-upon group statement, many important points will be brought up, discussed, and either discarded or kept as a part of the group response.

To help the group remember these points during the discussion, overhead transparencies are included as a part of the PLANNING FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT PACKAGE. These provide ample space for writing, and furnish a convenient way to keep track of the discussion by keeping the important points always before the eyes of the group.

SLIDE/SOUND PRESENTATION——

As a supplementary audio-visual tool for use with the PLANNING FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT PACKAGE, the slide show presents the need for careful planning, some pitfalls to watch out for, and the twelve steps which form the planning process.

The slide show can be used in two ways:

> First, it may be presented from beginning to end, without stopping. This approach provides an introduction to the planning process, in which the twelve steps are presented and briefly explained.
>
> Second, the show may be stopped after each of the twelve steps while the group completes that particular step, using their Handbook. With this method, the show is an integral part of the group process.

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